Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SINGAP 05739 310108Z
ACTION H-03

INFO OCT-01 EA-06 ISO-00 SS-07 AID-01 NSC-06 /024 W
----------046043 311326Z /41
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FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9299
INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

UNCLAS SINGAPORE 5739

E.O. 11652: N/-
TAGS: OREP (WOLF, LESTER)
SUBJECT: STRAITS TIMES ARTICLE ON CODEL WOLFF

1. STRAITS TIMES DECEMBER 30 FRONTPAGED STORY BY ITS WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT MILTON CHASE UNDER HEADLINE "BIG US TEAM COMING FOR TALKS", CONTINUED ON BACK PAGE UNDER HEADLINE "CONTRESS NOT IN FAVOUR OF TRADE CURBS." ARTICLE STRESSED THREE POINTS: BI-PARTISAN DELEGATION IS COMPOSED OF SENIOR MEMBERS OF IMPORTANT HOUSE COMMITTEES, WOLFF WILL REASSURE PRIME MINISTER THAT U.S. WILL REMAIN A PACIFIC POWER, DELEGATION CAN IMPART FEELING CONGRESS IS NOT PROTECTIONIST. SUMMARY/EXCERPTS FOLLOW:

2. FOURTEEN SENIOR MEMBERS OF INFLUENTIAL CONGRESS COMMITTEES, REPRESENTING BOTH POLITICAL PARTIES, WILL ARRIVE IN SINGAPORE JAN 12 FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH PRIME MINISTER LEE KUAN YEW AND OTHER TOP GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS.

3. ASIAN SECURITY, FREEDOM OF SEAS, TRADE AND ECONOMICS, US INVESTMENTS, AND NARCOTICS CONTROL WILL BE AMONG MAJOR TOPICES PURSUED BY CONGRESSMEN LED BY LESTER WOLFF DURING THREE-DAY STAY.

4. WOLFF, CHAIRMAN OF HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS, AND COLLEAGUES WILL SEEK TO
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PAGE 02 SINGAP 05739 310108Z

REASSURE LEE THAT IT IS US INTENT TO "REMAIN IN PACIFIC AND THAT OUR OBJECTIVES ARE TO DISCUSS WITH LEE WAYS AND MEANS BY WHICH WE CAN BEST IMPLEMENT THIS POSITION".

5. DELEGATION MADE UP OF MEMBERS OF IMPORTANT HOUSE COMMITTEES WHICH DEAL WITH FOREIGN POLICY, TADE

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

AND ECONOMY, DEFENCE, ARMED SERVICES, AGRICULTURE,
AND NARCOTICS CONTROL.

6. AIN PURPOSE OF VISIT IS TO LOOK INTO CHANGES
THAT HAVE OCCURRED IN SEA FOLLOWING END OF VIETNAM
WAR AND CHANGING PATTERNS OF SECURITY IN AREA.
DELIBERATIONS ALSO WILL BE HELD ON QUESTION OF
INDIAN OCEAN AND ITS REQUIREMENTS.

7. WOLFF, VACATIONING AT HIS HOME DISTRICT OF GREAT
NECK, NEW YORK TOLD ME BY TELEPHONE HE WAS WELL
AWARE OF LEE'S CONCERN OVER SECURITY OF SINGAPORE,
MAINTENANCE OF FREE PASSAGE AND FREEDOM OF SEAS,
AS RESULT OF DISCUSSIONS LAST OCTOBER DURING PM'S
WASHINGTON VISIT.

8. "PRIME MINISTER LEE IS CONCERNED, AND I UNDERSTAND
HIS CONCERN," WOLFF TOLD ME, "OVER POSSIBILITY THAT
IN ANY CHANGE IN US POLICY, US NO LONGER WOULD HAVE
STRONG PRESENCE IN ASIA AND PACIFIC.

9. "BUT SINCE WE CONSIDER OURSELVES PACIFIC NATION
AS WELL AS ATLANTIC POWER, WE WILL GIVE LEE
REASSURANCES THAT WE WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN PACIFIC
NATION. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF PULLING OUT FROM
PACIFIC."
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PAGE 03 SINGAP 05739 310108Z

10. WOLFF TOOK ISSUE WITH SOME ASIAN INTERPRETATIONS
THAT PROPOSAL FOR PHASED WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS FROM
SOUTH KOREA AND PROPOSED REDUCTION OF US BASES IN
PHILIPPINES IMPLY THAT US IS TURNING AWAY FROM ASIA
AND PACIFICE.

11. HE MADE CLEAR THIS WAS FALLACIOUS REASONING.
GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF US TROOPS STEMS FROM US
CONVICTION THAT SOUTH KOREA CAN HANDLE ITS OWN
DEFENCE AND DOES NOT MEAN US IS TURNING ITS BACK
ON KOREAN NEEDS.

12. "I AM," HE SAID, "SUPPORTING ADMINISTRATION'S
PLAN TO WITHDRAW US TROOPS OVER PERIOD OF YEARS,
BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN THERE WILL BE ANY LESSENING
OF OUR SUPPORT FOR OUR POSITION THERE. FACT IS
THAT SOUTH KOREANS DON'T NEED STRONG US MILITARY
FORCE ANY LONGER.

13. "BY SAME TOKEN WE ARE RE-NEGOTIATING OUR BASES
AGREEMENT WITH PHILIPPINES AND WILL BE REDUCING THEIR

Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009

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SIZE BECAUSE THERE NO LONGER IS ANY NECESSITY FOR MAINTAINING THOSE BASES AT THEIR FORMER STRENGTH. IT JUST IS NOT REALISTIC TO KEEP LARGE MILITARY FORCES IN AREA WHERE THEY NO LONGER ARE NEEDED."

14. "VERY HEAVY COMMITMENT WE MADE AS RESULT OF VIETNAM WAR IS NO LONGER NECESSARY. BUT THIS DOES NOT MEAN WE, IN ANY MANNER, SHAPE OR FORM, WILL BE PULLING OUT OF WHOLE PACIFIC AREA. WHERE NEED IS INDICATED FOR US SUPPORT AND PRESENCE, WE WILL FULFILL THAT REQUIREMENT."

15. TURNING TO QUESTION OF TRADE, WOLFF BELIEVED MEMBERS OF BOTH PARTIES REPRESENTING VARIETY OF
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PAGE 04 SINGAP 05739 310108Z

COMMITTEES WHO WILL BE WITH HIM IN SINGAPORE "CAN GIVE LEE A GENERAL FEELING THAT CONGRESS IS NOT PROTECTIONIST."

16. "WE OF COURSE ARE ANXIOUS TO SEE TO IT THAT WE SURVIVE ECONOMICALLY AND THAT WE MAINTAIN OUR FISCAL INTEGRITY AS A NATION."

17. WOLFF HELD OUT BRIGHTER ECONOMIC PROSPECTS FOR SINGAPORE BECAUSE OF GROWING IMPORTANCE OF ASIA AS MAJOR US TRADING PARTNER. HE POINTED OUT THAT "THE MORE ECONOMIC AND TRADING EMPHASIS WE PLACE ON THE AREA, THE GREATER THE BENEFITS FOR SINGAPORE BECAUSE IT IS ENTREPOT FOR REGION."
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Disposition Approved on Date:
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Disposition Comment:
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Disposition Event:
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22 May 2009
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